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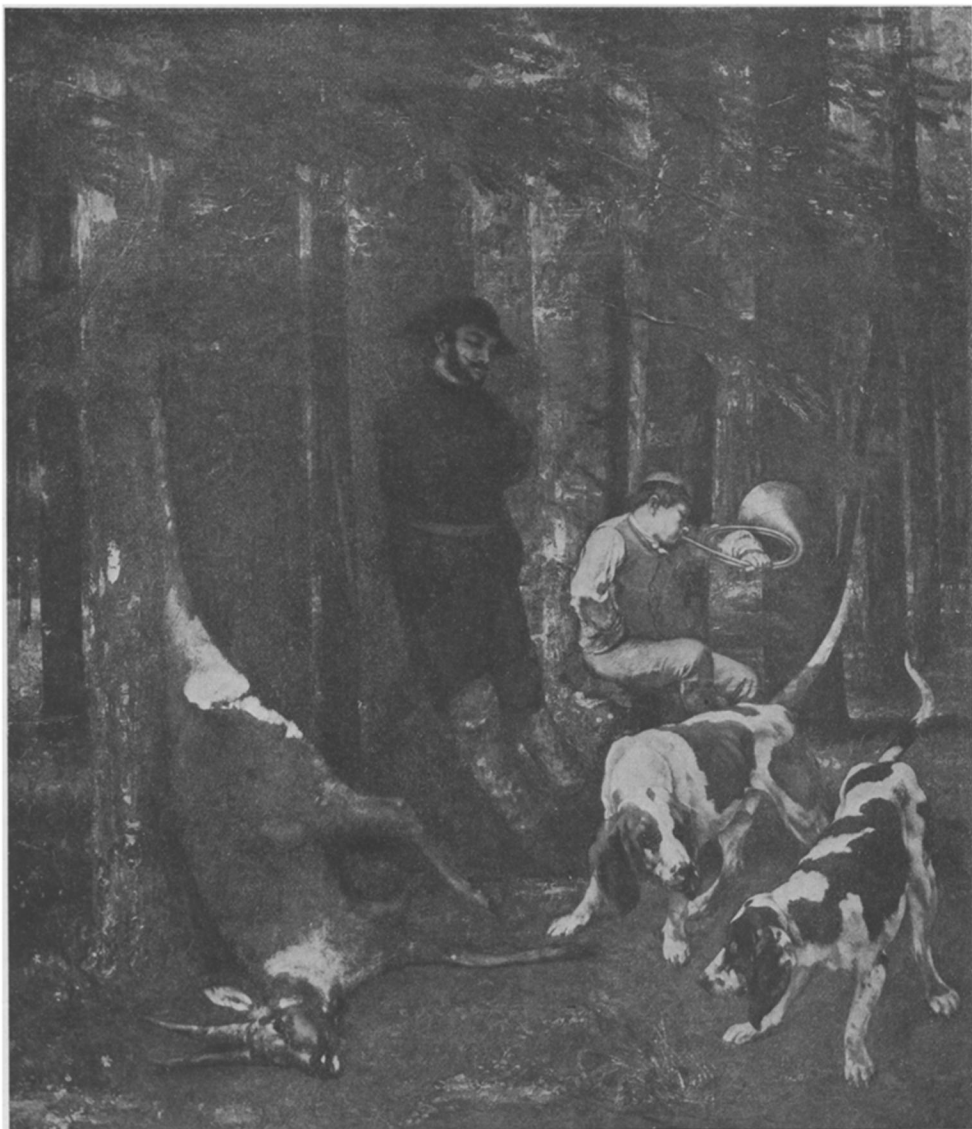
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Chasse au chevreuil dans les forêts du grand Jura : la curée

Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)

Purchased 1918

Number 621 in the Salon of 1857. First bought by M. Vanisack of Antwerp. After the exhibition at Frankfort transferred to M. Luquet in exchange for other pictures. In 1866 bought by the Allston Club of Boston and shortly afterward by the late Henry Sayles. First shown at this Museum in 1877, the year of Courbet's death and the year after the opening of the building on Copley Square.

Hunting the Roebuck in the High Jura: The Quarry

Gustave Courbet

"J'aime le son du Cor, le soir, au fond des bois,
Soit qu'il chante les pleurs de la biche aux abois,
Ou l'adieu du chasseur, que l'écho faible accueille
Et que le vent du nord porte de feuille en feuille."^{*}
—Alfred de Vigny.

AMONG tall pine trees a huntsman and his boy, the game and the dogs at their feet, await the arrival of the hunt. The light is that of late afternoon. One hind hoof of the dead buck has been tied to a low branch of one of the trees, his head and forequarters lying on the ground. The hanging hind quarter shows marks of the dogs' teeth, and the eyes are glazed. Beyond, in shadow but central in the canvas, appears the sturdy figure of the huntsman standing backed against another tree, smoking his pipe, his arms folded, his eyes half closed, his feet apart. He wears a soft black hat with a wide brim, a blue hunting blouse belted in, brown trunks and gray leggings plastered with mud or with foam. His rifle hangs behind him. In the foreground one of the hounds, spotted with red-brown on white, turns a threatening muzzle toward the other, spotted in dark brown, who gives place unwillingly. The jaw of the first is bloody, and there is blood on the grass under his forepaws. His tail is tense, that of the other relaxed in a curve. Against the tree next beyond the huntsman, the boy has seated himself upon his folded jacket, and the light, falling between, brings out his figure. He wears a close brown cap, a red waistcoat and gray-brown trousers. With his right hand akimbo on his hip, where a fleck of foam is visible, and with head cocked to one side and his eyes half closed, he lazily fills his cheeks to blow the Hallali, or Call to the Quarry, upon his wide-mouthed horn, supporting the curving double tube on his left elbow. A level forest floor spreads in the distance, its green herbage lit by spots of sun.

The picture conveys in various ways a vivid message of calm after tumult, repose after effort. The two hunters are benumbed by their fatigue. The body of the buck bespeaks the helpless abandonment of death. It is idle activity only to which the dogs are stirred by the nearness of their reward. The fancied echoes of the horn seem to break an absolute stillness among the evenly planted trees. The quieting shadow of a great forest hangs over the whole canvas.

The uplands of the Jura near Courbet's native village of Ornans (Doubs) are covered with majestic pine woods abounding in roebuck. Courbet was an ardent hunter. He cared more for the music of the hunter's horn than for any other, and used often to play the horn at night in his studio at Ornans. "La Curée" is one of several pictures

commemorating his sporting days, and has been called "an episode of the hunt in the governmental forest of Levier." The horn is sounding and Courbet himself is listening.

Notwithstanding the low pitch in which the picture is painted, it is of unique force. Expressed in values which would have changed the bit of sky from a quality of turquoise blue to a pale tone of ultramarine, the composition would have carried further, yet would have yielded something of its peculiar power. The palette here chosen lends itself to much truth of local color without detriment to the even tone of the picture. This technique could hardly admit of being carried to greater perfection.

The canvas has been enlarged by an upper strip beginning close above the huntsman's head and by an extension a few inches wide on the left. The underpainting of the upper strip has not quite the weight of that of the rest of the canvas. Whether intentionally or not, the enlargements meet two criticisms of the picture given by Théophile Gautier on its first exhibition before the changes at the Salon of 1857. "*Il ne manque à la Curée pour être un chef-d'oeuvre que la fuite aérienne, le sentiment de la proportion et des plans.*" The present crown of tree trunks and tree tops gives the aerial distance the picture lacked; and the figure of the huntsman, enhanced by its more central position, now takes its proper plane nearer the eye than the more brilliant figure of the boy with the horn. The artist has easily vindicated at once Gautier's acute judgment and his own realistic choice of chiaroscuro for his masterpiece.

"La Curée" and another important hunting subject—"The Doe Driven Down in Snow: Jura"—shown by Courbet at the same Salon seem themselves answers to Gautier's advice to the artist in 1855 to drop his apostleship of the naturalistic creed and develop the great landscapist there was in him. In divining Courbet's chief strength Gautier noted also the chief difference between his epoch-making personality and that of his renowned contemporary, Millet. In Courbet's outdoor subjects the landscape interest tends to be uppermost; with Millet the human interest is always uppermost. An incautious critic once spoke of Courbet as "he who showed the way" to Millet and others, doubtless alluding to Courbet's early transcripts of peasant life, "The Stone-Breakers" and "The Burial at Ornans." But Millet in a private letter rightly maintained his own originality and priority. "Above all," he wrote, I am "touched by man as passively dedicated to the hard labor of the soil"; and his "Winnower" was shown in 1848. Courbet's two canvases not until 1850. Nevertheless, the similar direction early given their realism by two widely different artistic natures witnesses a quality deep in the French soul. The word "fraternité" is no rhetorical addition to the national motto of France.

Courbet the man is remembered chiefly as the

^{*}"I love to hear the Horn, toward night, deep in the woods,
Whether it chant the sobbing of the doe at bay,
Or the huntsman's farewell, by a faint echo caught
And by the north wind carried on from leaf to leaf."

instigator of the destruction by the Commune of the Vendôme column dedicated to the glory of Napoleon I. His radical sympathies, awakened by association since 1848 with his compatriot Proudhon, had already been manifested by his refusal of the Cross of the Legion of Honor offered by Napoleon III; and under the Commune he became President of the Commission of Artists. The Republic condemned him to pay the cost of restoring the column; and he died a few years later a broken-hearted exile in Switzerland. It is fortunate for his fame in this community that the great work by which he will chiefly be remembered here records his active and joyous youth in the woods of his native Jura.

Burmese Glazed Tiles

THE glazed tiles or bricks from Pagan in Burma, moulded in high relief with representations of episodes from the Jatakas or stories of the former incarnations of the Buddha, are very well known.* The Museum is fortunate in possessing two excellent examples, presented by Dr. Denman W. Ross. These are in the style of the series found at the Mangalacet and Dhammarajika pagodas, and like them have inscriptions in Pali and Burmese. They date from the twelfth or early thirteenth century A. D.

The inscriptions on the Museum examples have been read by Mr. Taw Sein Ko of the Archaeological Survey of Burma, and enable us to identify the subjects with certainty. The first, with a Burmese inscription to the effect, "The goddess instructs Temi," illustrates the Mugha-pakkha Jataka and

*Taw Sein Ko: *The Plaques Found at the Petaik Pagoda, Pagan*. Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1906-1907. Calcutta, 1909.

Duroiselle, C.: *Pictorial Representation of Jatakas in Burma*. Ibid., 1912-1913. Calcutta, 1916.

Gruenwedel, A.: *Glasuren aus Pagan*, in *Veröffentlichungen aus dem kaiserlichen Museum fuer Voelkerkunde in Berlin*.

Phayre, A. P.: *Memorandum upon . . . Tiles Obtained at Pagan*. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. London, 1864.

shows the future Buddha as a young prince reclining on a bed. He does not wish to become a king, since kings, by reason of the cruel punishments they must inflict on criminal offenders (and the prince, according to the story, has recently seen an instance of this), are placed as it were on the highway to hell. In this predicament the goddess of the royal umbrella at his side appears to him, and advises him how to avoid the throne by making himself out to be a cripple and an idiot.

The second plaque has a Pali and Burmese inscription to the effect, "The Bhadda-sala Jataka: the Bodhisattva, a tree-sprite." The Bodhisattva at that time inhabited the largest tree in the park of the king of Benares, and when this tree was selected to be felled to provide a column of sufficient size to bear the weight of an entire palace, which the king proposed to build in this fashion in order to be "different" from other kings, the Bodhisattva reflected that in falling the tree would crush innumerable younger trees around it. Accordingly he visited the king — this is the theme of the relief — and begged to be cut down section by section, from crown to foot, in order to avoid the destruction of the other trees. Touched, however, by this generosity, the king abandoned his fancy altogether and spared the giant tree.

The style of these plaques is that of the Pagan art of the period (twelfth to thirteenth century A. D.); but apart from the form of the houses — not represented in either of these examples — almost everything represented in the Pagan plaques is Indian in character. The costumes are reminiscent of those to be seen in the mediæval sculptures of Eastern, Southern and Central India. At the same time the distinctive flavor of Burmese art is recognizable in nuances of drawing and gesture only less readily definable. In these tiles the Museum possesses adequate examples of what has been termed by Duroiselle the school of Pagan. A. K. C.



Fig. 1. The Mugha-pakkha Jataka: the goddess instructs Temi



Fig. 2. The Bhadda-sala Jataka: the Bodhisattva visits the King

Burmese Glazed Tiles, twelfth to thirteenth century
Ross Collection